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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/712,142	11/14/2003	Petru Baci		8197

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PETRU BACIU  
APT. 5-K  
31-20 54TH STREET  
WOODSIDE, NY 11377

EXAMINER

BOMAR, THOMAS S

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3672

DATE MAILED: 10/20/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

10/712,142

Applicant(s)

BACIU, PETRU

Examiner

Shane Bomar

Art Unit

3672

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 1 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 November 2003.  
2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.  
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 is/are pending in the application.  
4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.  
5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.  
6) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are rejected.  
7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.  
8) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.  
10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).  
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.  
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_\_.  
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)  
6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

LC

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Election/Restrictions*

1. Restriction to one of the following inventions is required under 35 U.S.C. 121:
  - I. Claims 1 and 2, drawn to procedures for the collection of free methane gas from the sea bottom, classified in class 299, subclass 8.
  - II. Claims 3-10 (it is assumed that the Applicant meant for claims 4-9 to depend from claim 3, not claim 2), drawn to apparatus for free methane gas collection that includes guiding arms, a platform, and separators and collectors suspended from the arms, classified in class 114, subclass 264.

The inventions are distinct, each from the other because of the following reasons:

2. Inventions I and II are related as process and apparatus for its practice. The inventions are distinct if it can be shown that either: (1) the process as claimed can be practiced by another materially different apparatus or by hand, or (2) the apparatus as claimed can be used to practice another and materially different process. (MPEP § 806.05(e)). In this case the process of group I can be accomplished using any type of platform on the ocean surface that is capable of collecting sea water containing methane gas, and thereafter separating the methane gas from the water.
3. Because these inventions are distinct for the reasons given above and have acquired a separate status in the art as shown by their different classification, restriction for examination purposes as indicated is proper.

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4. If the Applicant elects Group I, then this group contains claims directed to the following patentably distinct species of the claimed invention:

Ia. Claim 1, embodied by Figures 1-9, drawn to a procedure for the collection of free methane gas from the sea bottom that includes the flowing of a mixture of methane gas and seawater into a room where the mixture is spread on a large surface to permit the separation of the gas from the sea water, the separated methane gas is then sucked into another room where it is condensed to further remove any seawater, the gas being further cooled to put it in a liquid state for transport drawn to an apparatus for free methane gas collection that includes guiding arms, a platform, trolleys, an anchor, a helicopter pad, and separators and collectors suspended from the arms.

Ib. Claim 2, embodied by Figure 10, drawn to a procedure for the collection of free methane gas from the sea bottom that includes bringing humid methane gas into a room where it is cooled by cool methane gas, wherein the dry methane gas obtained is further subjected to at least two compression and cooling steps, followed by adiabatic expansion of the methane gas to move the gas into the liquid phase.

5. Conversely, if the Applicant elects Group II, then this group contains claims directed to the following patentably distinct species of the claimed invention:

IIa. Claims 3-9, embodied by Figures 1-9, drawn to an apparatus for free methane gas collection that includes guiding arms, a platform, trolleys, an anchor, a helicopter pad, and separators and collectors suspended from the arms.

Iib. Claim 10, embodied by Figure 10, drawn to an apparatus for free methane gas collection that includes a platform, turbocompressors, coolers, a methane liquid tank, a laminate valve, and an ejector.

Applicant is required under 35 U.S.C. 121 to elect a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits to which the claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable. Currently, no claims are generic.

Applicant is advised that a reply to this requirement must include an identification of the species that is elected consonant with this requirement, and a listing of all claims readable thereon, including any claims subsequently added. An argument that a claim is allowable or that all claims are generic is considered nonresponsive unless accompanied by an election.

Upon the allowance of a generic claim, applicant will be entitled to consideration of claims to additional species which are written in dependent form or otherwise include all the limitations of an allowed generic claim as provided by 37 CFR 1.141. If claims are added after the election, applicant must indicate which are readable upon the elected species. MPEP § 809.02(a).

Should applicant traverse on the ground that the species are not patentably distinct, applicant should submit evidence or identify such evidence now of record showing the species to be obvious variants or clearly admit on the record that this is the case. In either instance, if the examiner finds one of the inventions unpatentable over the prior art, the evidence or admission may be used in a rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) of the other invention.

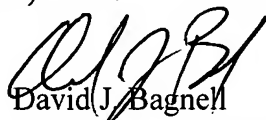
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6. Applicant is advised that the reply to this requirement to be complete must include an election of the invention to be examined even though the requirement be traversed (37 CFR 1.143).


7. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Shane Bomar whose telephone number is 571-272-7026. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Thursday from 7:00am to 4:30pm. The examiner can also be reached on alternate Fridays.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David Bagnell can be reached on 571-272-6999. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

  
David J. Bagnell  
Supervisory Patent Examiner  
Art Unit 3672

tsb

  
October 13, 2005